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SIX CRATERS ON THE PUNA TRAIL

Attraction: Visitors to the Volcano Should Not Miss.

(By Sol. N. Sheridan.)

The geologists, who are the fellows
that know what the balance of us can
only guess at, have a theory that these
islands of Hawaii lie along a fault in
the surface of the earth running in a
general direction from northwest to
southeast. A fault, by the way, is a
polite way to express the fact that the
old Earth is cracked. A geological
friend of mine once told me, speaking
of this matter, that the fact that there
was a fault here was borne out on the
island of Hawaii by the existence of
the line of the so-called "Six Craters"

running generally in the same direction
from the great crater of Kilauea down
toward the sea through the Puna coun-
try. I don't know anything about geol-
ogy, not a thing, but you do not have to,
to appreciate the fact that the big
island of Hawaii is ripped up the back
after you have seen the Six Craters.
Of course, the crater of Kilauea is the
principal attraction at the Volcano
House—but it is not the only thing
there that is worth seeing. The very
cracks in the earth will make you sit
up and take notice, particularly if you
see them first after a day of rain, for
they all steam as though they were
very close indeed to the fire that is the
interior of things. You will notice that
there are no springs in the woods
around there. The seepage water gets
hot as soon as it penetrates the porous
earth a little distance, and is thrown
off in the form of steam. And it is a
kind of sulphurous steam that leaves a
yellowish stain on the ground from
which it issues, and gradually builds
up sulphur banks such as lie in the
plain over against the hotel.

A NATURAL LAUNDRY.

There is a perfectly splendid forest
of fern trees, and if you are of an ob-
serving mind you will notice, on your
way to visit this, that the Jap woman
of the house is of an economical turn
and has set her sheet iron tubs of soiled
table linen over the hot cracks in the
earth, and that it takes but a few
minutes to boil the water, even at that
elevation. George Lycurgus, it is true,
does not use the heat from these cracks
for cooking. He cooks, and heats his
big sitting room, too, with kōa logs,
like the generous host that he is—but
he might cook for the hotel in this
natural furnace if he saw fit. Alex
Lancaster, the guide, will do it for you
in the main crater of Kilauea, making
coffee and broiling steak and frying
ham in the fire that nature has made
to remodel the world. For man is a
little thing, just like that. Which
may be why nature sometimes gets
angry at him and sweeps him out of
existence by wholesale. I fancy that

I would do the same thing, if I were
nature—and I have no doubt whatever
that you yourself have seen times when
people so aggravated you that you have
felt, if you have not expressed, the
wish to make the whole thing over
again.

But, while there are no springs about
the Volcano House, some predecessor
of Lycurgus there has walled up a
place right in the center of one of the
great hot fissures, and this has become
filled with water. And the present
manager uses this as a frog pond. It
is full of great big fat fellows, who
thrive in the tepid water. Also, the
hot steam so permeates the earth
about there that the Volcano House
gardens have become a wonder, pro-
ducing more than enough vegetables to
supply the hotel table, and of a size
and flavor that are amazing.

THE SIX CRATERS.

Kilauea, as everybody knows, lies
high up on the slope of Mauna Loa,
which yet reaches above it into the
clouds. The slope is gentle, so gentle
that you hardly realize at the Volcano
House that you are on a mountain, and
realize with more difficulty the tremen-
dous elevation of Mauna Loa itself. The
big mountain, which embraces in its
bulk the greater part of the island of
Hawaii, seems just a great round hill,
and in the clear air it looks as though
you could walk to the summit of it
without any trouble at all. But, you
couldn't. You could not ride to the
summit, without almost killing a
horse. They charge you the price of a
horse to go up there, in fact, because
they figure that afterwards the horse
that you have ridden will be played
out.

And you cannot see the summit of
Mauna Loa at all from the Volcano
House, nor from anywhere near its
base. You just see a great, gently
swelling dome that looks like it is the
summit. The mountain, still rising, is
so nearly flat in its contour that the
real top is lost to the eye before your
gaze can get up there. And for the same
reason, you cannot get any broad,
sweeping view from the summit
of the mountain.

I did not go up there, but this in-
formation is upon the authority of L.
A. Andrews, formerly sheriff of Hawaii.
And I should fancy, if the great crater
of Mauna Loa were active when you
got to the top, that you would not
want any sweeping view. You would
want to go away from there, and by
some road not likely to be followed by
a flow of lava, or hot mud. Because
the flows that lie along the sides of
the mountain, all the sides, are most
grimly suggestive of what might hap-



PECULIAR LAVA FORMS AT KI LAUEA.

pen to a man who had the misfortune
not to get out of the way.

AGAIN 'THE SIX CRATERS.'

Well, I am coming to them. They
are not to be reached without some ef-
fort, particularly if you are no more
accustomed to riding on horseback
than I am. It is a ride of twenty-six
miles to see the Six Craters, and if
you have not been on the hurricane
deck of a horse for five or six years,
that is not a joke. But you go down
through a beautiful forest of fern and
lehua trees at a sweeping gallop, after
you have gained a little confidence in
your horse, and in the sweet morning
air of the mountain side that is a de-
lightful experience. Your horse knows
the road, too, and has a lot more
faith in you than you have in him.
You see, a horse has no perspective.
All men look alike to him—unless they
happen to be women. And then the
difference is that they wear divided
skirts, and have a tendency to clutch
at his mane and to shriek if he stops
suddenly in a bad place to pick his
steps. However, the horse does not mind
if he had been educated in the tourist
business.

The first of the Six Craters, properly
speaking, is Kilauea-iki, but that does
not come in the grand tour of them.
It lies close to the Volcano House, so
close that it is the proper thing to walk
down to it from the hotel, stopping for
a new and unique view of the main
crater as you go at a spot called
"Lovers' Leap." I do not know that
any lovers ever leaped there. They
were fools if they did, because they
could not have picked out a worse place
to light. Sheer a thousand feet the
cliff falls away into the main crater,
above the trail that leads down to the
black lava through the fern and lehua
trees, and at the bottom is the tumbled
sea of stone that is the crater. Be-
yond, over the black and jagged
masses, the Pit's mouth is seen with
the smoke crawling up lazily if of an-
gry color, and still beyond towers the
swelling crest of Mauna Loa. It is a
great sweep that will take your breath
as you gaze—and maybe there is a
tradition of some lovers that leaped
there, once upon a time. If there is
not, you can invent one that is better
than the name of the place, anyhow.
Because "Lovers' Leap" is really trite
and altogether unworthy.

THE LITTLE KILAUEA.

It has been supposed that the Pit of
Kilauea-iki is not a crater at all, but a
place into which lava has run from the
main crater of Kilauea, but in view of
all things I am not inclined to accept
that theory. Neither am I inclined to
advance one of my own. But Kilauea-
iki is a pit, as the Pit of Halemau-
mau is, and I fancy gives you something
of an idea of what the other may be
at some time in the far distant future—
provided there is no great convulsion
in the meantime. It looks a thousand
feet sheer to the lava if the floor of the
little crater, and the stuff seems to lie
smooth there, as though it had been
leveled with a roller while it still held
heat enough to be plastic. It is seam-
ed and cracked in every direction, but
without disturbing this effect of
smoothness. However, it is only an
effect. That lava in the bed of Ki-
lauea-iki is much like the lava in the
bed of the main crater.

At least, that is what those energetic
persons say who have climbed down the
precipitous trail into the place. I did
not go down, myself, being too busy
sitting on the brink to enjoy the view.
But I observed one thing, which ob-
servation I afterwards verified in the
wall of the main crater of Kilauea,
namely, that in places high up on the
sides of the pit the rough lava, or a-
seemed to have broken right out
through the soil and run down into
the sides towards the bottom. And
that, somehow, seems to fit in with the
theory that there never was much of
an explosion at Kilauea, but that the
hot lava just ate its way through the
earth's crust, and flowed out to fill a
depression in the mountain.

SOME VERY OLD PITS.

After Kilauea-iki, the others. And
then comes that long horseback ride.
The experience, however, is well worth
it. All the island of Hawaii seems
much more picturesque than Oahu,
perhaps because a world in the making
is more scenic than one already com-
pleted. The first of the craters, the
"twins," so called, or Hahok, lie in the
trees at but a few miles' distance
from the hotel, and the wayfarer is apt
to pass them altogether if the guide is
not at hand to point them out. They
have grown up with trees and ferns
and vines, and are in effect now but
little more than depressions in the for-
est—but still in line with that crack
that seems to run from the summit of
Mauna Loa down to the sea through
Puna. There is a story that once a
lava flow followed that line from Ki-
lauea under the ground, and emptied
the Pit of Halemau-mau itself into the
sea with a mighty roaring and great
convulsions of the entire island.
Beyond Maho'i the road, become but a

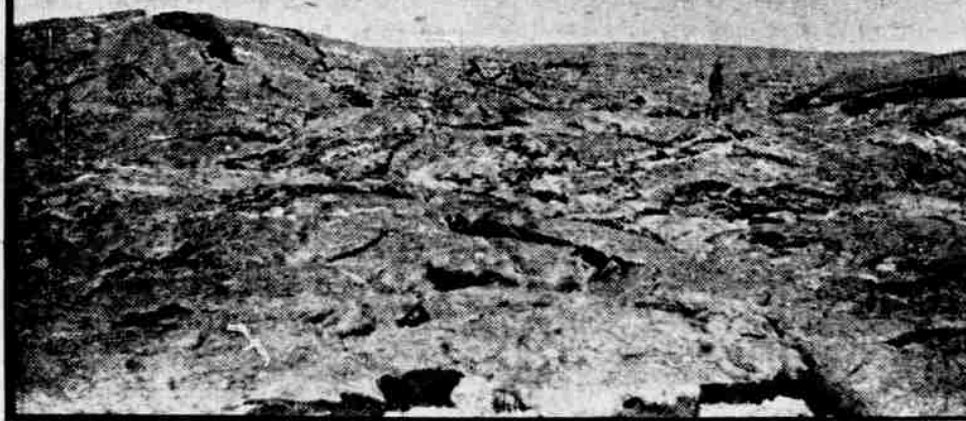
crooked bridle-path, still leads through
the dense forest for a distance of
about three miles, and then suddenly
approaches a sharp little cone at the
foot of which—or, rather, half way up
which, you leave your horses and
scramble to the top. And there you
look into a great amphitheatre, whose
bottom seems a thousand feet below
you, and which is filled with lofty lehua
trees and nodding ferns that look like
trees in a picture, so far below you are
they. This is the second crater of the
six, Pua, huluhulu, or the Blanket Hill
crater.

A few feet only beyond this, still on
that winding trail through the forest,
lies Aloi, or the Swamp crater. But
why swamp, there is nothing to indi-
cate. There is no trace of swamp, past
or present, in all that region. Maybe
the crater itself will hold water in wet
times, as Diamond Head does. It is
grown up somewhat with vegetation,
at all events, and there is a trace of
steam here and there as though the
forces that had formed it were still
quietly at work—as, of course, they are.
But the lava in the bottom of the pit
is cold.

THE EYE OF THE EEL.

From the summit of the hill of the
Blanket Hill crater, which is the only
one of the lot showing a cone, I could
see a deep pit in the distance, which
looked not more than a mile away, but
which Alex said was five. It was to-
ward this pit the road led, with some
stops by the way, and the second of
these was at Alealea, or the Bright
crater. This is truly a tremendous pit,
but it also has grown up with vegeta-
tion. So dense is the tree growth in
and about it that it is difficult to see
the bottom at all, and we sat under the
shade of a tree and ate luncheon with
our feet dangling over the edge. And
I, at least, clasped a tree trunk as I
ate. Because, I did not want to fall
down into that tremendous abyss.

If the Bright crater was deep, what
is to be said of Makapuhi, or the Eye
of the Eel, which is the last of the
group, ten miles distant from the Vol-
cano House—and a good twelve as the
trail winds through the forest? There
are signs of activity all about this
crater. There are signs that it once
made up its mind to quit work alto-
gether, and then had a warm time all



COOLED ASPHALT OR A FROZEN SEA.

by itself as an afterthought. The pit
in its deepest part, is said to be 1200
feet deep, and the fall is sheer. It
makes you fairly gasp to look over the
edge. And, when you have done that,
you see a column of steam arising di-
rectly from the lowest point of the
cup-shaped depression which makes
the lowest pit.

Makapuhi is, in fact, larger and
deeper than Halemau-mau. The pit, it
is very plain, went out of business for
the first time a long while ago. It was
as large as it is now, at that time, but
was only about five hundred feet deep.
Trees grew in its bottom, and soil was
formed there. Then, after many years,
a part of the pit, about half of it,
broke down to the greater depth that
it shows now. It seems as though
about half the bottom had fallen out
of the main pit, making the cup-shap-
ed depression from which steam now
rises, which suggests that a crater
may be dead, to all intents and pur-
poses, and still be very active on the
inside.

A SEVENTH CRATER.

There is still another crater in the
neighborhood of Kilauea, very little
visited but still well worth visiting.
I stumbled upon it accidentally, in the
course of a walk I took one day all
around the great crater of Kilauea.
This seventh crater is called Kaneka-
koi, or the Sound of the Axe, and the
edge of it may be seen beyond Kilauea
from the hotel veranda. To reach it,
you must cross the main crater on the

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lava, skirting the lower edge, and com-
ing out on the opposite side at the
first point of easy ascent which pre-
sents itself in the wall.

You will find that the wall falls away
there, in fact, and that there is a de-
pression leading up to the little cra-
ter. It is a very fine scenic effect that
you get in gazing down into Kaneka-
koi, and the crater itself can be en-
tered without any trouble at all. It
has a lava floor, similar to that of Ki-
lauea-iki, but the lava is much smooth-
er. And one marked characteristic of
the place is a straight crack in the
floor, extending right away across the
crater.

Afterwards, I walked all around Ki-
lauea itself, a little promenade of
twenty miles, they said, over a waste
of ashes that broke under foot precisely
as the crust breaks upon snow that has
frozen. I am perfectly prepared to be-
lieve that it is twenty miles, moreover.
It seemed a good deal more than that
to me. But the walk was well worth
the effort.

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